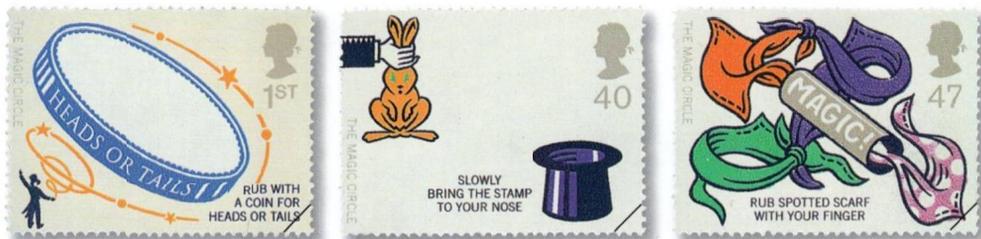


## Magic Royal Mail's next special stamp issue



### Technical details

Printer Walsall

Process Gravure

Stamp size 41 x 30mm

Sheet size 25 and 50

Perforation 14.5 x 14

Phosphor Two bands

Gum PVA

Gutter pairs Vertical

### Colours

**1st** dark blue ● cool grey ● orange ● light blue

**40p** dark blue ● cool grey ● orange ● green ● purple

**47p** dark blue ● cool grey ● orange ● green ● purple ● red<sup>1</sup>

**68p** dark blue ● cool grey ● orange ● red ● green

**£1.12** dark blue ● cool grey ● pink<sup>1</sup> ● purple<sup>1</sup> ● blue<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> thermochromic ink

FIVE STAMPS celebrating the centenary of the Magic Circle go on sale at Post Office branches and philatelic outlets and Royal Mail Tallents House on 15 March. The Circle was founded by John Nevil Maskelyne (1839-1917), regarded as the father of modern British conjuring. The stamps feature: 1st Spinning coin – heads or tails; 40p a rabbit out of hat trick; 47p knotted scarf trick; 68p card trick; and £1.12 pyramid under fez trick. The stamps were designed by Tatham Design using illustrations by George Hardie. In keeping with the subject, the stamps feature magic tricks which can be enjoyed by the collector or user of the stamps. On the 1st class you can rub with a coin the blank coin shown on the stamp to reveal a head or a tail of a coin. The two versions of the stamp appear identical before rubbing; they are printed in alternate rows of the sheet, indicated by the small letters H and T in the left sheet margin. Follow the instructions on the other stamps for an illusion or trick. Thermographic ink, as used on the 27p Weather and 2nd class Nobel Prizes stamps in 2001, has been used in the printing of the 47p and £1.12 Magic stamps.

The stamps will be issued to Post Office branches in sheets of 25. However sheets of 50 with gutter margins will be available from Post Office philatelic outlets and Royal Mail Tallents House.

**FIRST DAY FACILITIES** Unstamped Royal Mail FDC envelopes will be available from main Post Office branches and philatelic outlets about a week before 15 March, price 25p. Orders for FDCs with the stamps cancelled by a pictorial first day postmark of Tallents House or London NW1 must reach Tallents House by the day of issue. Price £3.82 UK or £3.31 overseas.

Collectors may send stamped covers on the day of issue to: Royal Mail Tallents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB (for Tallents House postmark), or to one of Royal Mail's Special Handstamp Centres (London postmark) marking the outer envelope 'FD0507' (Tallents House), or 'FD0508' (London). Covers can be posted or handed in at main post offices for the London postmark. A non-pictorial London postmark is also available from Special Handstamp Centres, request 'FD0508 NP'.

Details of sponsored handstamps for 15 March will be announced in the *British Postmark Bulletin* – available on subscription from Tallents House (£12.25 UK/Europe; £24.95 elsewhere). For a sample copy write to: The Editor, British Postmark Bulletin, Royal Mail, 148 Old Street, London EC1V 9HQ.

# celebrates the centenary of the Magic Circle



The Magic stamps feature tricks which can be enjoyed by the collector or user. Rubbing the 1st class with a coin, for example, will reveal a head or a tail of a coin, but the two versions of the stamp appear identical before rubbing. Each value in the set is printed with a similar instruction for another illusion or trick.



**PHILATELIC PRODUCTS** A well-illustrated pack (price £3.45) and stamp cards (30p each) will be available from main Post Office branches and philatelic outlets and Talents House. The pack, written by John Fisher, gives a history of magic since the formation of the Magic Circle, with potted biographies (and some illustrations) of famous magicians past and present. These include Maskelyne, David Devant, Harry Houdini, Robert Harbin, Tommy Cooper, The Pendragons, Penn and Teller, Siegfried and Roy, Paul Daniels, and David Copperfield.

**SMILERS SHEET** The Smilers sheet for the Magic issue contains 20 1st class stamps; price £6.15. The labels alongside the stamps illustrate how to perform four magic tricks: coin from thin air; nothing up your sleeve; magic handkerchief; and coin from a bread roll. The sheet is printed by Walsall in litho •

**Magic** When The Magic Circle was founded in 1905 every major city had its own music hall where many magicians enjoyed top billing. In central London alone there were no fewer than 57 such venues, as well as 'England's Home of Mystery', a theatre dedicated to magic, established by John Nevil Maskelyne in 1873. The industrial revolution brought large sections of the working population to the towns, and theatres thrived, bringing a new respectability to the practitioners of hocus pocus. Previously they had performed mostly at town fairs and in market places. Now proper theatre stages enabled them to perform larger stage illusions, very often dependent upon secret stage machinery, while theatre lighting and controlled audience seating allowed magic with much smaller objects to reach a much bigger audience.

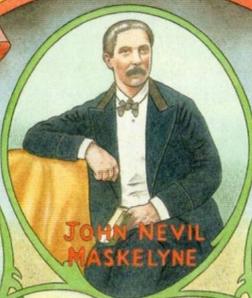
Films led to the decline of the variety theatres and magicians were forced to find other venues; in the 1930s many performed in nightclubs. The most significant development was the arrival of television, making it possible for a performer to play to more people in one night than Maskelyne entertained throughout his career. TV magicians such as David Nixon, Doug Henning and David Blaine became household names.

Magic is still big business – in the glitzy showrooms of Las Vegas spectacular big-stage illusions have made an impressive comeback, and conjuring on television continues to amaze millions. A new generation of creative young performers, using new technology, will ensure that magic will continue to enchant and mystify well into the 21st century •

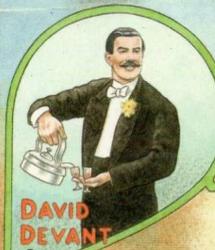


**Magic stamps** This is the first set of Royal Mail stamps devoted to magic. The children's puppet Sooty and his famous magic wand (shown in Harry Corbett's pocket), appeared on a Children's Television stamp in 1996, and the much-loved Tommy Cooper featured on the 20p stamp in the Comedians set of 1998. Dice are often associated with magic, and a dice and board games were shown on the 32p value of the 1989 Games & Toys issue. Merlin the magician appears with King Arthur on the 17p Arthurian Legends stamp of 1985 •

# PAST MASTERS OF MAGIC



**JOHN NEVIL MASKELYNE**



**DAVID DEVANT**



**HARRY HOUDINI**



**PSYCHO THE WHIST PLAYING AUTOMATON**



**CHUNG LING SOO**



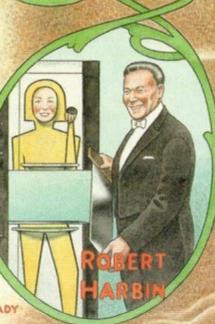
**CARDINI**



**A WOMAN SEEN IN HALF SHE EMERGES UNHARMED**



**HORACE GOLDIN**



**ROBERT HARBIN**



**THE FLOATING LADY ILLUSION**

This illustration from the Magic stamps presentation pack, by Tony McSweeney, features some of the great practitioners of the past.

John Nevil Maskelyne (1839-1917), regarded as the father of modern British conjuring, founded a theatre of magic which flourished for 60 years.

David Devant (1868-1941) was the first President of the Magic Circle and the most popular performer of his day.

Harry Houdini (1874-1926) was arguably the greatest showman of all time.

Chung Ling Soo (1861-1918) a famous 'Chinese' conjuror, concealed his real identity as an American.

Horace Goldin (1873-1939), the 'Whirlwind Wizard', was the first magician to saw a woman in half.

Cardini (1896-1973), or the 'Welsh Wizard', redefined the image of the magician in the 1930s.

Robert Harbin (1909-1978), a pioneer in television, revolutionised large-scale stage magic.